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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 21 April 1977, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. JOEWONO (Indonesia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

THE CHAIRMAN'S LETTER DATED 14 APRIL 1977 TO THE GREAT POWERS AND MAJOR MARITIME USERS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

1. The CHAIRMAN said that three countries had replied to his letter. Greece and Panama had expressed their willingness to co-operate with the Ad Hoc Committee, and Italy had said that the matter was under consideration. The Committee must therefore decide on the manner in which non-member States would participate in its work. One possible solution would be to grant them observer status, so that they could participate in both formal and informal meetings without however, having the right to vote.

2. Mr. KUBBA (Iraq) said that he had no objection to the solution proposed by the Chairman but wished information on the procedures used by other committees.

3. Mr. KHERADI (Secretary of the Committee) said that no definitive precedent had been set and the Ad Hoc Committee was the master of its own procedure.

4. Mr. MOHAJER (Iran) said that if all States were invited to participate in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, the group of littoral and hinterland States might become superfluous.

5. Mr. RASOLONDRAIBE (Madagascar) said it was his understanding that all States Members of the United Nations had the right to request observer status but that those countries which were specifically invited to co-operate with the Ad Hoc Committee would, in addition, be able to participate in informal consultations.

6. The CHAIRMAN said that it was for the Ad Hoc Committee to decide whether different countries should be granted observer status. However, the littoral and hinterland States would be invited to work with the Committee, whereas other States would themselves have to take the initiative in requesting the right to participate in the Committee's work.

7. Mr. JIMANI (Kenya) said that countries which received an invitation to co-operate with the Ad Hoc Committee should be permitted to participate in informal consultations.

8. Mr. VANDERGERT (Sri Lanka) said that his delegation advocated a pragmatic approach and would welcome the participation of the great Powers and major maritime users, regardless of the form of that participation. If the Ad Hoc Committee made it difficult for States to participate, those States which did not wish to participate would have an additional excuse for staying away.

9. Mr. OXLEY (Australia) said that any State Member of the United Nations could request observer status, but it was then for the Ad Hoc Committee to decide whether to grant that status. The Committee might have some moral obligation to deal sympathetically with requests for observer status from great Powers and major maritime users, but it would be difficult to refuse a request for observer status from any State.

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10. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that Greece and Panama had indicated their desire to co-operate with the Ad Hoc Committee but had not requested observer status.

11. Mr. YEO (Malaysia) said that it would be quite consistent with the Ad Hoc Committee's mandate to grant observer status. Initially, States should be permitted to participate in plenary meetings of the Committee when they wished. However, at a later stage of its work the Committee might wish to invite certain States to express their views on a specific subject, and an appropriate system should be devised to deal with that eventuality.

12. Mr. MULYE (India) said that the Ad Hoc Committee could invite States to comment on a given subject at a given meeting, could grant States observer status, or could permit their participation on a continuing basis. According to paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 31/88, the littoral and hinterland States would participate in consultations concerning the Conference on the Indian Ocean. The Ad Hoc Committee must therefore decide whether such States should be involved in matters other than the Conference. He suggested that the Committee should hold more informal consultations on the subject.

13. Mr. MOHAJER (Iran) said that the group of littoral and hinterland States could be enlarged to include Greece, Panama, the great Powers and major maritime users. Consultations could then continue informally within that forum, and any decisions would be formalized by the Ad Hoc Committee.

14. The CHAIRMAN proposed that Greece and Panama should be invited to participate in meetings of the littoral and hinterland States in order to contribute to the formulation of a programme of action leading to the convening of a Conference on the Indian Ocean. He also proposed that the Ad Hoc Committee should proceed with its informal consultations and that the Chairman should send letters to States represented on the Committee, as well as to all littoral and hinterland States, asking for their views on a programme of action leading to the convening of a Conference on the Indian Ocean, so that those views would be available to the Committee at its session in September and could be reflected in the Committee's report.

15. It was so decided.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION LEADING TO THE CONVENING OF A CONFERENCE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

16. Mr. DAMANIK (Indonesia) said that support for the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace had increased considerably and the willingness of major Powers to consider measures conducive to the implementation of the Declaration had opened up major new possibilities. However, the Ad Hoc Committee had made no substantial progress in discharging its mandate, and although a broad consensus had emerged with respect to the desirability of convening a conference of littoral and hinterland States, there was still no agreement as to the venue, duration, level of participation, agenda or purposes of such a conference. The Committee must therefore review its approach to its mandate and should seek to harmonize the views and interests of the littoral and hinterland States. To that end, it would be necessary

(Mr. Damanik, Indonesia)

to consider the possibility of modifying the mandate of the Committee so as to enable it to focus its attention on the formulation of a draft treaty for the establishment of a zone of peace in the region. That task would require a schedule of meetings extending over a period of four to six weeks, but the fact that the whole process would take several years and that there existed widely differing viewpoints among States should not deter the Committee from implementing the Declaration. Experience had shown that an issue with such far-reaching ramifications could not be resolved in a short period of time, and his delegation therefore considered that work on a draft treaty might best be divided into two phases. The first phase would consist of a series of meetings among the littoral and hinterland States, the aim of which would be to establish the basic framework and definitions for a draft treaty. During the second phase, the littoral and hinterland States, as well as extra-regional Powers, would convene a conference to consider the draft treaty, which would include, among other things, an elaboration of the principal ideas of the Declaration and elements of regional co-operation in various fields. At the same time, it would be necessary to convene additional sessions of the Ad Hoc Committee in order to broaden areas of agreement. Flexibility was vital.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.